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# ON TAP

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## ***A LOOK BACK AT THE OCTOBER FIRE***

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Living in a region that is at the footsteps of Cleveland National Forest has benefits that may be too numerous to mention. We all enjoy the scenery and the feeling that we are close to nature at some time during the months and years. However, living so close to nature does come with certain risks; we were certainly reminded of this during the recent fires.

Trabuco Canyon Water District, its Board of Directors and staff, is very appreciative of the efforts of the emergency personnel that worked so diligently to protect life and property. Trabuco Canyon did have a very close call during the fire. A simple drive through the canyon area will reveal the devastation that any fire is capable of bringing. This region has seen fire in the past, but mixing fire with the Santa Ana winds is a dreadful combination.

At the risk of stating the obvious, water was a critical component in fighting the fire. TCWD did its part to assist in providing all the necessary water, timely information for emergency personnel, and post fire repair.

It may be of interest to customers of TCWD that as a matter of operational protocol, the water department for TCWD fills all of its reservoirs to maximum capacity when there are Santa Ana winds. Filling all the reservoirs is a strategic move on the part of the District to guarantee that all the water that could possibly be provided is available during a fire event. During the October fire,

the water consumption for three days in a row District wide was the equivalent to the water consumption of a summer day in excess of 100 degree heat.

During the course of the year, you may see District personnel opening and flushing a fire hydrant. This is done District-wide and has two purposes: 1) during periods of low water use, flushing the fire hydrants will bring fresh water into the supply line, and 2) opening and closing the fire hydrants is an important part of assuring they will operate correctly during an emergency.

Trabuco Canyon Water District staff meets annually with representatives of the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) to review which facilities are critical and need to continue operating during a fire; almost exclusively these are reservoirs and water pump stations. During this recent fire, coordination with the OCFA was critical to protect essential water reservoirs which supplied water at the fire near Cook's Corner. These reservoirs are in Cleveland National Forest and cannot be easily seen.

Just as importantly, the District is very fortunate to have its major water pumping stations located in areas through out the District that are easily protected from fires. The electrical supplies to these stations are underground supply lines, and don't risk the interruption of electrical supply due to burning power poles. This was a serious problem early on in the fire for the canyon areas served by Irvine Ranch Water District.

A special thank is due to the neighboring Districts of Trabuco Canyon Water District: Irvine Ranch Water District, Santa Margarita Water District, and El Toro Water District. While each district has its own source of water supply, all of the Districts have inter-tie connections for sharing water during emergencies or maintenance shutdowns. During the fire, the above mentioned districts assisted by supplying additional water through their delivery systems and reservoirs. South County is very fortunate to have water districts that have forged very cooperative working relationships that serve all of their residents very well during a time of emergency.

Is there any advice the District could pass on in the event of another fire? There are several:

- 1) The clearing of brush and shrubs away from structures, particularly in the rural canyon areas, is essential. The Orange County Fire Authority has excellent information about this. ([ocfa.org](http://ocfa.org))
- 2) Now is a good time to discuss with family members your emergency evacuation plan, how you will maintain contact with family members, and what items you need to take with you if you need to evacuate. When an evacuation order occurs, time is critical, less than 10 minutes in some cases.
- 3) Check to see if the area in which you reside has an emergency notification system that you can register to be notified. This is sometimes called a reverse "911" system. This system was used very effectively recently in the City of Rancho Santa Margarita. If you live in RSM, you can sign up on the city's website. It takes only a few minutes.
- 4) If the fire isn't near your house, particularly if you live in a planned development (a housing tract), then watering your house and lawn may not help. In fact, it creates a real strain on the water system

## TCWD'S ON TAP

when the water might be better used at a different location.

The Regular Board Meeting is held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the District office located at 32003 Dove Canyon Drive, Trabuco Canyon. The public is encouraged to attend.

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### BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

- ◇ October 17, 2007 – Discussed and directed staff to notice a Public hearing for December 19, 2007 concerning the Reclaimed Water System and proposed Reclaimed Water Allocation Program.
  - ◇ Received information relating to the Received status updates relating to the following engineering projects: Rose Canyon and Lang Wells Upgrades to Treatment Facilities; Dry Season Water Recovery Project; and Robinson Ranch Road Recycled Water Distribution System Expansion.
  - ◇ Reviewed a proposed Agreement with Municipal Water District of Orange County.
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*ON TAP* is published and distributed by TCWD. We welcome your comments, suggestions and questions. Please call or write Sharon E. Smith, Editor

TCWD's *ON-TAP*

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